

AUTOPROP

£1,480 TO POA H5-394mm tested: £1,620



Brunton's Autoprop marked a completely different approach to feathering props when it was brought out in 1987. The three blades rotate independently, going from fully feathered while sailing, or in neutral, to fully twisted under power. The difference is that when you go into gear, the amount they rotate depends on engine speed and loading. Thus the ahead

or astern pitch varies according to engine rpm, which, Brunton claims, improves performance and fuel economy, with reduced rpm and so improved comfort onboard for a given cruising speed. We can confirm the latter: our tests show the Autoprop achieved 6 knots at 2,100rpm, compared to 2,500rpm for our standard prop and most of the others on test. However, other

tests have shown the trade-off is more drag than other feathering props, though still 80% less than a fixed prop. Bollard pulls were on the low side, but it still achieved near the maximum top speed, with mid-range stopping distance.

Sizes 13in-35in **Max power** 300hp

Website www.bruntons-propellers.com

Tel 01255 420005

AUTOSTREAM THREE-BLADE

£2,050 TO £2,460 17x11in tested: £2,095



From Australia comes the Autostream, a three-bladed feathering unit that has been in production for 26 years. Construction is all-stainless steel with a zinc anode at the aft end of the boss, and the blades swivel 180° to give the same leading edge in astern as ahead.

Separate ahead and astern pitch can be adjusted by the owner without dismantling the prop. It has been designed to stay feathered at speeds up to 25 knots, helped by extra blade area aft, making it suitable for fast multihulls. On test, it gave the fastest stopping time of all the folding or

feathering units, plus significantly lower side-thrust than the rest, while still maintaining good ahead speed.

Sizes 15in-22in **Max power** 80hp

Website www.steeldevelopments.co.uk

Tel 020 8874 7059

AXIOM THREE-BLADE

£590 TO £1,230 16x11in tested: £690



The Axiom is the joker in our pack. It is not a folding propeller, and is unlikely to cause less drag than a standard prop, but it does have a revolutionary blade profile and section, if you will pardon the pun, and has never been tested on a yacht before, so we just had to put it into our trials. As the photographs show, the blade profile

is rectangular, while the blade section is almost S-shaped, and symmetrical in ahead and astern, with no twist. Its designers claim it gives greater thrust and stopping power, together with lower wash. So how did it stand up against the standard fixed prop and the others? The charts show the story, with its stopping time nearly a second

better than any other model, and its side thrust again the lowest by far. This was at the expense of lower top speed, which suggests some more tweaking is needed, but it is still one to watch.

Sizes 12in-24in **Max power** 120hp

Website www.axiompropellers.com

Tel 01832 734609

FEATHERSTREAM THREE-BLADE

£1,130 TO £1,680 16x11in tested: £1,150



Made in England for the past 18 months, this is a three-blade feathering unit with a bronze boss and stainless steel blades. The pitch of the blades can be adjusted externally, and can be different for ahead and astern. The blades swivel 180° to present the same leading edge in ahead

and astern. As a result, it performed well in astern: second best for bollard pull and third for stopping distance.

The first few times we gently put it into astern it didn't deploy reverse but this didn't happen again. Darglow put it down to the fact that the

unit was newly and tightly packed with grease, which took a couple of operations to free up, something to watch for if you repack any prop and then relaunch.

Sizes 12in-20in **Max power** 75hp

Website www.darglow.co.uk **Tel** 01929 556512

FLEXOFOLD THREE-BLADE

£1,485 TO £4,075 16x11in tested: £1,690



Made in Denmark for the past 12 years, the Flexofold is an all-bronze folding unit, with blades fixed by stainless steel pins, and the anode, which covers the gearing, cleverly enclosed by the folded blades. On test, it gave

the equal highest forward thrust of all props, and highest top speed. It also had one of the lowest side-thrusts. Going astern, its performance was the best of all the folding propellers.

At a cruising speed of 6 knots, the engine was

turning at 2,300rpm, compared to the 2,500rpm of our standard fixed prop and most of the other props on test.

Sizes 14in-24in **Max power** 350hp

Website www.darglow.co.uk **Tel** 01929 556512

FLEXOFOLD TWO-BLADE

£705 TO £1,605 16x13in tested: £885



A two-blade version of the Flexofold, its performance was only slightly down on the three-blade, and in fact better for astern thrust. With better test results across the board

than some three-blade units, it exploded the commonly held myth that twin-blade props are inefficient. It did suffer some vibration due to the skeg. A racing two-blade version is also available.

Sizes 12in-20in

Max power 250hp

Website www.darglow.co.uk

Tel 01929 556512

GORI THREE-BLADE

£1,840 TO £6,900 15in tested: £1,840



Another of the earliest folding designs, the Gori propellers have been made in Denmark since 1975, in two and three-blade versions, but the company only recommended the three-blade for this boat. Gori also makes a racing two-blade version. The blades have a three-way gearing

system for opening and closing. Boss and blades are bronze, with stainless steel pins. A speciality is its overdrive feature, which sets the blades in a coarser pitch if you first get the boat moving in astern, then engage ahead, which allows you to cruise or motor-sail at lower rpm. Performance

ahead and astern were near the bottom of our list, with the longest stopping distance, but the prop walk was third best (see note on p101).
Sizes 15in-30in **Max power** 300hp
Website www.sillette.com
Tel 020 8337 7543

KIWI PROP THREE-BLADE

£985 for all sizes 16x11in tested: £985



Designed in New Zealand nine years ago, this is only available as a three-blade unit. The boss is stainless steel and the blades, which rotate independently of each other, are glass-reinforced Zytel plastic. Each blade has two different aerofoil sections, as you move out

from the boss. It has no internal gears, so each blade feathers independently according to the waterflow over it. The blades do not swing completely round in reverse, so the trailing edge becomes the leading edge. It was one of the simplest to fit – just slide it on and tighten the

nut. Mid-range for astern thrust and stopping distance, but the lowest top speed. It also went easily into astern.
Sizes 15.5in-18.5in **Max power** 56hp
Website www.vectamarine.com
Tel 01672 564456

MAX PROP THREE-BLADE

£1,795 TO £16,045 16x11in tested: £2,065



Designed by Massimiliano Bianchi in 1976, the Max Prop was one of the first of the new generation of props. Boss and blades are bronze, and the pitch can be set as you assemble it, or by

the factory if you want a different astern pitch. The blades swivel 180° to present the same leading edge in ahead and astern. It gave the best astern thrust, and was in the middle of the

pack for stopping distance. It never missed a beat going into astern.
Sizes 12in-40in **Max power** 350hp
Website www.darglow.co.uk **Tel** 01929 556512